

THE NEW ZEALAND TABLET

'To promote the cause of Religion and Justice by the ways of Truth and Peace.'

LEO XIII. to the N.Z. TABLET.

THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 1902.

PEACE.

ALITTLE before ten o'clock on Monday morning the message which had been so anxiously expected and so eagerly awaited during the past week came at last—that the horrible war was over and that peace was formally declared. The actual cable intimation as received in this Colony contained only the two words, 'Peace declared,' and at the time of

our writing no details are yet to hand as to the actual terms of the settlement which has now happily been effected. It is to be gathered, indeed, from late cables that the Boers are to receive substantial representation on the new Council to be appointed for the government of the country, with the promise of a gradual approximation to representative self-government as we are familiar with it in the colonies; and further, that the British Government, probably recognising the difficulty involved in requiring the Transvaalers to abandon the Free State comrades who had thrown in their lot with that of the Republic, have acceded to the request for reserving only to themselves the right to 'take cognisance of the traitorous conduct of the leaders of the rebellion in Cape Colony.' Beyond this nothing is at present known except that the Boers have definitely surrendered and that the Transvaal is now in reality what it has for some time been in name—an integral part of the British Empire under the title of the Vaal River Colony.

Apart, however, from any question as to the minor details of the actual settlement, the broad fact that at last this terrible struggle is ended affords ground for heartfelt and universal satisfaction. The war has indeed been—as Lord ROSEBURY called it—'a running sore' draining away, both swiftly and surely, the strength and manhood, the blood and treasure of the nation. In men alone, the cost of the war, considering its comparatively short duration, has been appalling, the number of fatalities running up to between thirty and forty thousand, and the other casualties reaching a total of considerably over eighty thousand. The direct money cost of the war—which is after all the least important item in the calculation—tots up to two hundred millions sterling, and what this means to even a wealthy country like Great Britain is being now brought home to the British tax-payer by a heavy increase in the burden of taxation. Then the indirect consequences of the war—the disorganisation of trade and business, the unsettling influence on the men who have returned, the maintenance of the disabled, the misery and suffering of the bereaved, the dangerous fillip given to the evil spirit of militarism, etc., have all to be taken into account. Truly the declaration of peace, tardy though it is, furnishes cause for universal rejoicing and thanksgiving.

We have heard a good deal lately about 'The Uses of War,' and it is perhaps natural that at the close of a long campaign we should be anxious to extract all the comfort we can from any incidental benefits or advantages that may have been derived. For certainly in itself war is evil—unalloyed, unmixed evil, utterly opposed both to the teaching of Christianity and to the dictates of humanity, civilisation, and common sense. Readers of CARLYLE will remember the striking passage in *Sartor Resartus*, in which the great Scotchman lays bare, in his own inimitable way, the utter absurdity and foolishness of war:—

What, speaking in quite unofficial language, is the net, purport and upshot of war? To my own knowledge, for example, there dwell and toil, in the British village of Dumdrudge, usually some 500 souls. From these, by certain 'natural enemies' of the French, there are successively selected, during the French war, say thirty able-bodied men. Dumdrudge, at her own expense, has suckled and nursed them. She has, not without difficulty and sorrow, fed them up to manhood, and even trained them to craft, so that one can weave, another build, another hammer, and the weakest can stand under thirty stone avoirdupois. Nevertheless, amid much weeping and swearing, they are selected; all dressed in red, and shipped away, at the public charge, some 2000 miles, or say only to the south of Spain and fed there till wanted. And now to that same spot, in the south of Spain, are thirty similar French artisans, from a French Dumdrudge in like manner wending; till at length after infinite effort, the two parties come into actual juxtaposition; and Thirty stand fronting Thirty, each with a gun in his hand. Straightway the word 'Fire!' is given, and they blow the souls out of one another; and in place of sixty useful craftsmen, the world has sixty dead carcasses, which it must bury, and anew shed tears for. Had these men any quarrel? Busy as the Devil is, not the smallest. They lived far enough apart, were the truest strangers; nay, in so wide a universe, there was even, unconsciously, by commerce, some mutual helpfulness between them. How then? Simpleton! Their Governors had fallen out; and instead of shooting one another, had the cunning to make these poor blockheads shoot.

That is true, in its main features, not of this or that war only, but of war everywhere and for all time. For the present, war may be, as we are constrained to believe it is, a necessary evil, but that does not make it one whit the less an evil.

With regard to the special lessons of this particular war we may have something to say at a later date. Of its incidental uses or advantages we have only time to make brief reference to two. In the first place, the war has been the occasion—on the part of both parties to the struggle—of some of the finest exhibitions of courage and endurance which the world has ever seen. On the British side the Irish and Scotch regiments in particular have covered themselves with glory, and have fully maintained the grand traditions which have made their names so famous, while our own boys, by their capacity both for steady and dashing work, have shown that they are born soldiers worthy to take their place by the side of the very flower of the best-trained troops of England. Looking at the Boer side, none but the meanest-spirited churl would refuse to give them credit for the splendid courage and undaunted spirit they have shown in this great struggle. The names of men like DE WET and DE LA REY will live in history, and, after their exploits, the expression 'Dutch courage'—once a term of disparagement—will become a synonym for bravery of the most indomitable and unconquerable kind. The other aspect of the war to which we wished to refer is the extraordinary and altogether unforeseen effect it has had in binding the colonies in closer union with the mother land. The sending of the first Colonial contingent was really an historic event, fraught with the most far-reaching consequences. For the future, for good or ill, whenever there are wars, or rumors of wars, our lot will be indissolubly linked with that of the rest of the Empire. The increased solidarity and sense of security thus obtained seem likely to be attended with an unsentimental and very matter-of-fact drawback in the shape of a proposal—to be submitted to the Conference of Premiers by Mr. BRODRICK—that we should pay our share of the financial responsibilities connected with all future wars in which the Empire is involved. If that is agreed to it can only be on condition that some form of Colonial representation at London is conceded, and in that case the proposal will only be the means of bringing the Colonies into still closer touch and still more complete identity with the fate and fortune of the mother land.

And our new friends and fellow-subjects—the Boers—what will peace mean to them? The only answer to that is, that a great deal—everything, in fact—depends on the spirit in which the British Government carry out the settlement which has now been arrived at. If there is unnecessary ostentatious display of force—any parade of the 'mailed fist'—the flames of Boer hatred and disloyalty will be re-kindled and will break out afresh on the very first opportunity. If, on the other hand, the British authorities seek to govern in the way that 'will least disturb the moral and social elements in South African life which were making towards amicable co-operation and fusion in the past,' if they